

Burn Out! A sermon preached on July 15, 2018 at St. Giles' Presbyterian Church, Prince George BC by Rev. Herb Hilder.

Lessons: I KINGS 19:1-18

II CORINTHIANS 4:5-12

MATTHEW 11:28-30

After what is a crystal clear sign of the power of God on Mount Carmel (last week's story)

Elijah is pumped – one sign being that he manages to run faster than Ahab's chariot and beat the king back home to Jezreel (some 25 miles)

I wonder about what Elijah is thinking as he runs that journey

--Baalism is dead

A court chaplaincy now in order

--other opportunities to lift up God and to make his own mark on the world

Perhaps?

But there is still that piece of work wife of Ahab's – Jezebel.

No matter, I have seen clearly the power of God!!

Jezebel sees husband Ahab's chariot returning from Mount Carmel

She assumes he carries good news

It is raining now – Jezebel assumes that Baal has answered the priests' prayer

Baal has won the day!!!

Ahab's entrance into the room where Jezebel stands betrays that all is not right in the matter of Baalism

I wonder...what did Ahab's face and body language show

Dead, he says

Dead? Who that little toad of a prophet – well good riddance

NO – the prophets of Baal – ALL dead

And Ahab haltingly and still in shock tells Jezebel what happened not only on the mountain top, But also as the prophets were led down into the Kishon valley

Baal is dead – The Lord he is God

I wonder what Jezebel's initial reaction was.

I have always seen her as someone who throws things in temper or frustration

I also see her as a shrieker and screamer

I can imagine for instance her shrieking at Ahab – you spineless wimp – I'll show you and that cursed little toad Elijah who is defeated".

The message from Jezebel is blunt

May the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of them by this time tomorrow (I Ki. 19:2)

And Elijah's reaction upon receipt of the message – Surprisingly NOT – well bring it on you old crow! NO – he is afraid – he is gripped by fear and doubt

So gripped that he flees as far as he can from Jezebel and the palace – **a day's journey into the wilderness** we are told

There under a broom tree and now totally preoccupied with dark thoughts – Elijah has a class A pity party!

I have had it Lord

I am a total failure

I thought I had done such a super job for you.

Now, there is no one else who can help in this matter.

What's the good in all of it?

I've expended all my energies for you Lord, Been faithful to you and this is the result – fear, isolation, discouragement and despair.

What a so very human story about how fear and weakness can creep into the hearts and minds of the most faithful!

A reminder –even the Biblical greats are not immune from times of discouragement, deeper, despondency and even depression

Being a faithful follower of the Lord God does NOT guarantee that our lives will be painless, without trouble, doubts or stressful situations that tempt us to lose hope,

The long view perspective and assurance that God is in control

Here in chapter 19 – Elijah is subject to the effects of too much strain, stress and pressure

Here he becomes open to doubts and sadness, fear and weariness

Nowhere in scripture does God ever trivialize our frailty and humanness.

This story is but one reminder that this is so...

With that in mind...*I think this part of Elijah's story allows us to honestly admit that there are times when we become weary – even weary in well doing*

These times do happen!!

Like Elijah,

Such times in our lives are often triggered by things not turning out as we had anticipated they would;

Perhaps like Elijah,

Despair, self-pity, discouragement is triggered by a time and situation where our hopes have been dashed.

Or the adrenalin rush is over after a great success or great effort and we are experiencing what too much adrenaline flow can do to us.

Such times when the smallest criticism can overwhelm and overshadow the positive

What the what if's or the what might have been are internally the most strident we hear

When disappointment and disillusionment are all we feel.

Where all we want to do is to run away and be by ourselves

When we are just plain and simply "sad".

And those inner voices really do matter at our souls do they not

- ✓ Why is this happening to me?
- ✓ I am no good
- ✓ Maybe God has gone off for a time to more important and vibrant people.
- ✓ I have done my best – yet look at what is happening.
- ✓ Is what I have done going to make any appreciable difference? –that’s one that haunts a lot of us – for I think each of us want to live a life that makes a difference do we not?

This morning’s account of Elijah under the broom tree reminds us then that *no one, not even the Biblical greats like Elijah are immune from times of despair, depression, self-pity and doubt.*

That is an important reminder for there is even yet,

Voices abroad in communities of faith that say – IF we are discouraged, in despair, depressed and despondent – ITS EXCLUSIVELY OUR FAULT
There is something wrong with our faith
Our commitment to the Lord, our prayer life.

Years ago, I remember a member of a neighbouring church said to me – what is it with our minister – has had to go on stress leave again! He has Jesus – why does the minister need stress leave?

I looked at this church member from another church –

I knew all too well what he was like and how he behaved to others in the wider community and replied,

“If you were my parishioner, I would probably need stress leave too – even though I too have Jesus. He laughed – thinking it was just a snappy comeback.

I was not laughing

But then this man was one of those self-absorbed individuals who never met a mirror they did not like!

The cares, realities and stresses of this life can wear any of us down – however mature we may be in the faith!

That’s reality and this part of the Elijah story brings it forward...

There are though some other realities this story recalls

As well as feeling sorry for himself – *Elijah cries out to God doesn't he*

He LAMENTS

I am a failure

I have not been able to follow up on what happened on the top of Mount Carmel

This is not solely a pity part though – it begins by crying out to God about life’s unfairness’s

Well, we know that life is sometimes very difficult and often unfair

There are times and situations and people that push our buttons and make us want to scream

Rather than trying to cap that sort of frustration, anger and upset indefinitely – which you cannot by the way.

Better to cry out to God in the form of lament –

Release to God all the anger and frustration you are feeling

He can handle it

He will listen and hear us.

It is no accident I believe that 1/3rd of the total 150 Psalms are psalms of lament

Lament is a healthy way of expressing ourselves

And Elijah reminds us we ought not to be afraid of practicing it more

God is not going to take us out

If we shake our fists, bang our feet and shout at him.

HE CAN TAKE IT!

Notice also what God does at the very beginning of this particular section of Elijah's story

He allows Elijah to rest

Human weariness is something of which God is aware.

The Psalmist is spot on when he declares

**it is vain that you rise up early and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil, for he gives sleep
to his beloved [Psalm 127:2]**

A truth not much in vogue today – so many
addicted to smart phones and people needing
instant responses to all questions – easy or not

Touch point – being spiritual does not
necessarily mean expending effort on reading the
Bible,

Prayer,

It may mean eating supper and going to bed!

Note as well,

God sends his angel to Elijah to find food and drink.

No lecture on living out the Godly life

No “come on, Elijah, you’re burning daylight

Simple food and then more rest!

One Biblical commentator has said of this particular
section – if we do not come apart and rest awhile –
we will simply come apart!

There IS a time when we need to get up and
go to work

And there is a time when we need to lay down and
take a nap

There are times when following the Lord, serving
Him,

Demands strenuous action, big decisions, hard
choices

And there are times when we need to sit in the recliner

Crank it back; get a bowl of salty nibbles a soda

Pick up the remote and watch something that is not “deep”.

There is a time to be active and a time to relax

Note as well – *only when Elijah is rested and fed does the angel lead Elijah to the place where God will speak.*

Touch point for us – Harried, exhausted, easily distracted, overcommitted, too busy about things people cannot listen to the voices of others, let alone God!

Note as well, God listens to Elijah again lament – but then says – no more talk Elijah – just watch, just listen, just wait!

In time, the result is *God’s reassurance that Elijah is not alone (vs18)*
God is with Elijah

And God reminds Elijah – you are not alone in another way Elijah – 7,000 in Israel have not bowed to Baal.

It’s not over until I say it’s over Elijah
There is still work for you to do...

I think, the Lord God can and does speak to us through the large and showy things and events of this life.

I am more and more convinced that God
speaks more often than not through the gentle
whispers,
Still small voices
And small nudges.
And if we are not quiet, patient and expectant for
Him to do just this,
We WILL MISS what God wants us to hear and to
know here and now.
AMEN.